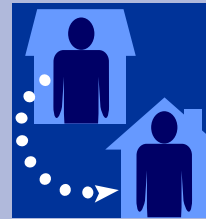


# ***SIPP Sample Design and Interview Procedures***




*This section provides basic information about the organizing principles of SIPP, sample selection, and SIPP's interview procedures.*

- *Organizing Principles*
- *Selection of Sampling Units*
- *Oversampling*
- *Identifying Sample Members*
- *Interview Procedures*
- *Following Rules*
- *Nonresponse*


## Organizing Principles

**Panels.** SIPP is a longitudinal sample that is administered in panels; each panel comprises a new sample. The early panels varied in length from 12 to 32 months. The 1996 Panel length was 4 years. Subsequent panels will be 3 years in length.

**Waves.** Within a SIPP panel, the entire sample is interviewed at 4-month intervals. These groups of interviews are called waves.

**Rotation Groups.** Sample members of each panel are divided into four subsamples of roughly equal size; each subsample is referred to as a rotation group. One rotation group is interviewed each month. 

**Reference Months.** During the interview, information is collected about the previous 4 months, which are referred to as reference months or the reference period. Because one rotation group is interviewed each month, the reference period is a different calendar period for each rotation group. [Link to a table that illustrates these variations.](#)

Most data are collected for each of the 4 months in the reference period. Some data, however—particularly topical module data—are collected on a weekly resolution or for some other time period. 

## SIPP

*Because some of the early panels had waves with fewer than four rotation groups, some topical information is not available for the full sample and the length of time an analyst can follow adults from the original sample is reduced for selected rotation groups.*

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*To ascertain correct reference periods, analysts need to become familiar with the questionnaire and skips in the questionnaire for each wave. This task is more difficult when working with the CAI instrument introduced in the 1996 Panel. For CAI instruments, SIPP screen books are available to help users discern the meaning of an item, but not its path logic.*

## Selection of Sampling Units

The Census Bureau employs a two-stage sample design to select the SIPP sample:

1. Selection of primary sampling units (PSUs)—The frame consists of U.S. counties and independent cities, along with population counts and other data for those units from the most recent census of population.
2. Selection of address units within sample PSUs—Five separate, non-overlapping frames are used: a unit area frame, a group quarters frame, a housing unit coverage frame, a coverage improvement frame, and a new-construction frame.

In SIPP, a housing unit is defined as living quarters with its own entrance and cooking facilities. The five frames include units such as residential houses, apartments, boarding houses, hotel rooms, and other housing-unit institutions such as convents and monasteries. *tip*

## Oversampling

To allow analysts to conduct meaningful analyses of the low-income population, the Census Bureau oversampled low-income strata in the 1990 Panel and, beginning with the 1996 Panel, will regularly do so. *tip*

## Identifying Sample Members

**Original Sample Members.** To identify sample members within selected address units, Census Bureau interviewers:

- **Compile** a roster for each sampled household, listing all people living or staying at the address
- **Identify** those who are household members by determining if the address is their usual residence
- **Designate** all people who are considered members as original sample members

## SIPP *tip*

*Because of SIPP's complex sampling scheme, software packages that assume simple random sampling for variance estimation will underestimate the true standard errors of SIPP estimates. (Link to the section on Sampling Error in this tutorial.)*

## *tip*

*Analysts who are using entire samples in any panels with oversampling will need to use weights in their analyses to redress the imbalance caused by the oversampling (see Chapter 8 of the SIPP Users' Guide).*

**Other Sample Members.** When original sample members move into households with other individuals not previously in the survey, the new individuals become part of the SIPP sample for as long as they continue to live with an original sample member.

Similarly, when new individuals move in with original sample members after the first interview, they too become part of the SIPP sample for as long as they continue to live with an original sample member.

The image shows a screenshot of a computer screen displaying the U.S. Census Bureau SIPP Core Content form. The header is blue with 'U.S. Census Bureau' in yellow and 'Core Content' in white. To the right is a blue box with 'SIPP' in white. Below the header, the text 'RPNAME' is followed by a question: 'What are the names of all persons living or staying here? Start with the name of the person, or one of the persons, who owns or rents this home. Please include middle and maiden names. PRESS ENTER IF NO MIDDLE OR MAIDEN NAME'. At the bottom, it says 'FIRST NAME @'.

## Interview Procedures

At Wave 1, interviews are attempted for all eligible members of the housing units who are at least 15 years old. When an interview cannot be conducted with an eligible member because the person is absent or incapable of responding, SIPP will accept a proxy interview, usually with another household respondent.

In subsequent waves, interviewers update their housing rosters:

- They list all eligible household members, including anyone who may have joined the household, and they record the dates of entry for anyone new to the household. *tip*
- They note people who left the household and the dates on which they left. Interviewers attempt to obtain the new addresses of original sample members.

## SIPP *tip*

*Key to SIPP data collection is identification of a household reference person, an owner or renter of record. The interviewer lists other people in the household according to their relationship to the reference person. The identification of the household reference person, and thus the household description, can change from month to month.*

## Following Rules

SIPP is a person-based sample. Interviewers attempt to follow original SIPP sample members who move, provided they do not move abroad or into institutions or military barracks.

Except for Waves 4+ of the 1993 Panel (when all original sample members and their newly born children were followed), the SIPP following rules designate that only sample members who are 15 years of age or older should be followed if they move.

If original sample members move more than 100 miles from a designated SIPP primary sampling unit, interviewers may attempt to reach them by phone. *tip*

[Link to an illustration of SIPP's following rules.](#)

## Nonresponse

SIPP, like all other longitudinal surveys, experiences non-response as well as sample attrition. The Census Bureau uses various methods to compensate for bias that might arise because nonrespondents differ from survey respondents on the survey variables.

**Household Nonresponse.** The Census Bureau distinguishes primarily between Type A and Type D household non-response. Type A nonresponse occurs when the interviewer locates the household but cannot interview any adult household members. Type D nonresponse occurs when original sample members move to an unknown address or to a non-interviewable address (the new address is located more than 100 miles outside a SIPP sampling area and telephone interview is not possible). Type D nonresponse applies only to Wave 2 and beyond.

## SIPP *tip*

*An important difference exists between a mover and a person who is temporarily away. A mover no longer lives at the sample address. A person is temporarily away if the household is the person's usual place of residence and he or she is free to return at any time—for example, a college student living on campus with a room held at home.*

**Person Nonresponse.** There are two forms of person-level, or Type Z, nonresponse:

- A sample person was in the household during part (or all) of the reference period and was part of the household on the date of the interview but refused to answer, or was not available for the interview and a proxy interview was not obtained.
- A person was part of the household during part of the 4-month reference period but then moved and was no longer a household member on the date of the interview. *tip*

**Item Nonresponse.** Item nonresponse occurs when a respondent does not answer one or more questions, even though most of the questionnaire is completed. Item nonresponse can also occur during the postinterview data editing process if respondents provide inconsistent information or an interviewer incorrectly records a response.

## SIPP *tip*

*Although household nonresponse is usually handled by weighting adjustments, person-level nonresponse is handled by imputation.*